DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 897 CG 025 159

TITLE	Kids and Guns: A National Disgrace. Third Edition.
INSTITUTION	Educational Fund To End Handgun Violence, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Nov 93
NOTE	21p.; Introduction by Marian Wright Edelman.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accidents; Adolescents; *Children; *Death; Elementary Secondary Education; *Homicide; *Injuries; *Violence
IDENTIFIERS	*Guns

ABSTRACT

Firearms related violence has taken its toll on American children: every day 13 children under age 19 are killed by gunfire and scores more are injured. Since 1980, there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of children killed by firearms, as well as in the number of increasingly younger and better-armed juvenile offenders. From 1985 to 1990, the number of teenagers murdered by firearms has doubled; at the same time the number of 15-year-old males charged with murder has increased by 217%. This report presents not only the statistical documentation of the toll gun violence takes on young people, but highlights the human side of the story as well. Four areas are considered: firearm homicide and youth; youth and firearm suicide; firearms and unintentional deaths; and gun violence in schools. The easy accessibility of firearms is a major problem. The availability of firearms has made firearm injuries the second leading cause of death behind motor vehicle accidents among youth ages 10 to 19. Among the recommendations that would help alleviate gun violence among children and adolescents were: removing handguns from homes with children, getting students involved in the cause of handgun violence, and mounting a massive public education program detailing the dangers of firearms. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

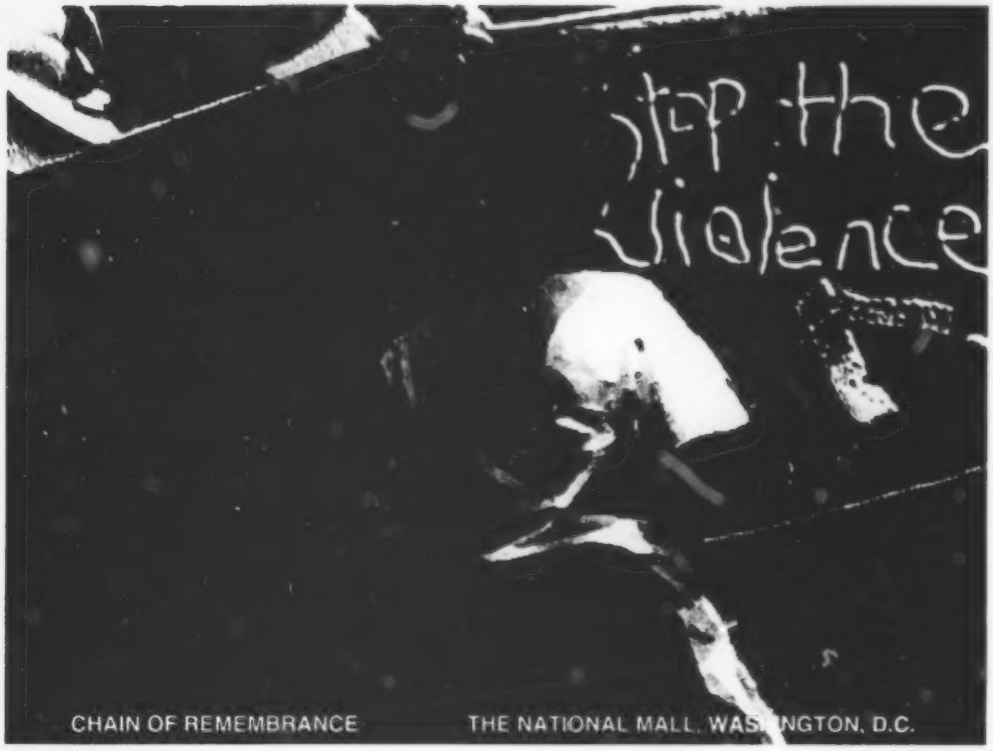
KIDS AND GUNS:

A NATIONAL DISGRACE

ED 365 897

With an introduction by

Marian Wright Edelman
President and Founder
Children's Defense Fund



CHAIN OF REMEMBRANCE THE NATIONAL MALL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Jackson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

THE EDUCATIONAL FUND TO END HANDGUN VIOLENCE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

110 Maryland Avenue NE • Box 72 • Washington, D.C. 20002
202•544•7214

Joshua Horwitz, Esq.
Executive Director

CG025159

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Educational Fund To End Handgun Violence wishes to acknowledge the work of Desmond Riley in the research, writing and production of this report and to thank him for his extraordinary effort.

Kids & Guns, Third Edition Copyright © 1993 by The Educational Fund To End Handgun Violence. All Rights Reserved. Contents may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of The Educational Fund To End Handgun Violence. The Educational Fund encourages those interested in reproducing this document to apply for permission.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

Kids and Guns provides a deeply disturbing account of the tragic toll on American children taken by firearms-related violence. Since 1980, there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of children killed by firearms, as well as in the number of increasingly younger and better armed juvenile offenders.

Currently, guns are used to murder at least one American child every three hours and at least 25 children—the equivalent of a classroomful —every three days. And, the number of children murdered with guns continues to rise. While juvenile homicides that do not involve firearms have declined since 1983, juvenile gun homicides have more than doubled. For young black men, the rate nearly tripled just from 1985 to 1990. In addition to the many children killed, every day scores of children are injured by guns. In fact, gunshot wounds to children ages 16 and under nearly doubled in major urban areas between 1987 and 1990.

We must not continue to tolerate the killing and victimization of our nation's children. Rather, we must provide hope, positive alternatives, and a sense of the future to this generation of children who too often seek in guns or drugs or other self-destructive behavior some of the self-esteem denied them in unstable homes, unchallenging schools, and communities that give them no sense of belonging and too little positive purpose. And, we must strive to reduce the current ready accessibility of firearms so that trivial spats do not result in multiple bullet wounds, so that children do not believe they must be armed in order to be safe, and so that we parents do not quiver in fear every time a child leaves the house.

In our homes, schools, businesses, congregations, and communities we must struggle to fill our children with the joy and the promise of life, not the lack of opportunity and the crippling fear that so many encounter. We must stop the violence so that, while they are children, our children have the "luxury" of being children, and so that they may have the opportunity to grow up to be healthy, productive adults.

—Marian Wright Edelman
November 1993

videographic composite by 2 PM

Chain of Remembrance
The National Mall, Washington DC.
May 1993

KIDS AND GUNS:

A NATIONAL DISGRACE

From 1985 to 1990 the number of teenagers murdered by firearms has doubled, at the same time the number of 15–year–old males charged with murder has increased by 217%.

When the second edition of Kids and Guns was published in 1989, no one could have foreseen that in the next few years gun violence among the nation's youth would increase so rapidly and dramatically. An epidemic of youth violence is sweeping the streets of our nation's cities, both large and small, and has begun to infiltrate suburban and rural areas where residents previously believed themselves immune from the carnage.

A Northeastern University study entitled "Recent Trends in Violent Crimes: A Closer Look" indicates that the increased rate of criminal homicide in every city or town with a population of over 25,000 people is due to the increased number of homicides committed by youth.[1]

In many cities and towns, political, community and business leaders are only now beginning to understand the enormity of the problem and have only recently begun to consider solutions. Meanwhile, the number of guns continues to grow along with the numbers of youth who have become all too willing to use them.

Not only are more children being shot to death, but more are doing the shooting. From 1985 to 1990 the number of teenagers murdered by firearms has doubled; at the same time the number of 15–year–old males charged with murder has increased by 217%.[2]

Arrest Rates for Criminal Homicide per 100,000 Males within Selected Age Groups.[3]

Age Groups	1985	1990	1991	% Change 85-91
12 & Under	0.1	0.1	0.2	100%
13-14	4.0	8.8	9.6	140%
15	11.8	31.0	37.4	217%
16	22.4	56.5	57.7	158%
17	34.5	72.4	76.1	121%
18-20	41.8	73.5	89.0	113%

•1

If action is not taken soon to rescue the children trapped in this ever increasing cycle of violence, then the United States is at risk of losing an entire generation. The victims will not only be those who were killed, but also the survivors, scarred by growing up in virtual war zones.

Every day 13 children under the age of 19 are killed by gunfire and scores more are injured.[4] Why is this happening and how long will the country let it continue?

Every day 13 children under the age of 19 are killed by gunfire and scores more are injured.

The statistics alone are frightening, but not nearly as compelling as the voices and the stories of the children trapped amid this madness. In this volume we will present not only the statistical documentation of the toll gun violence takes on young people nineteen years and younger, but highlight the human side as well.

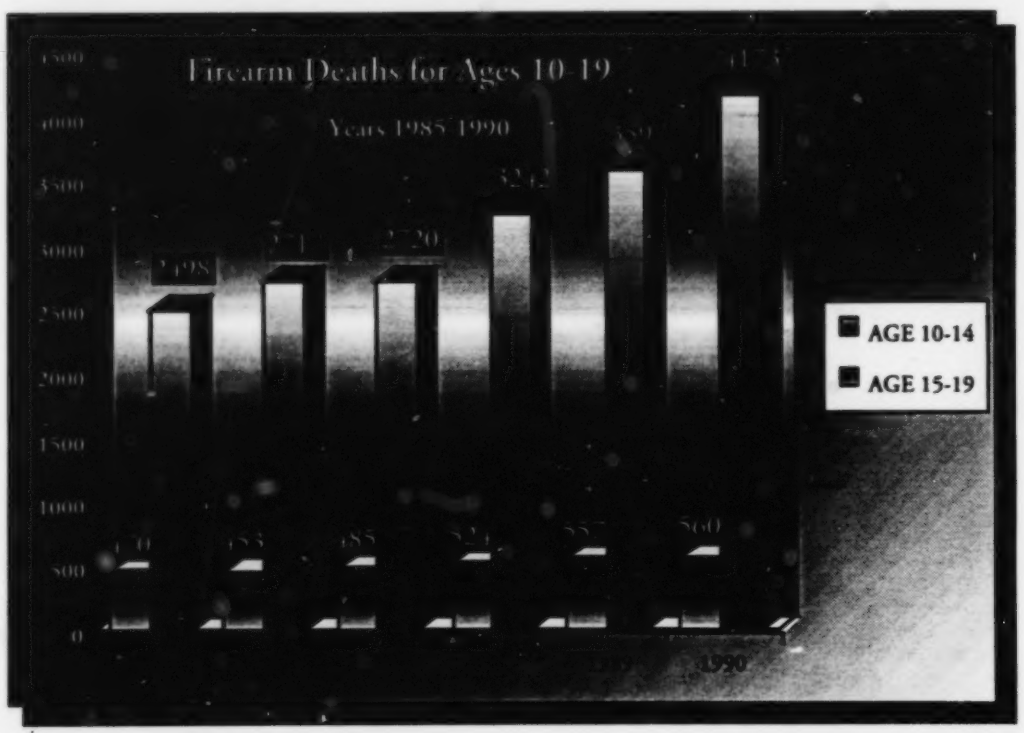
The report is separated into four areas: Youth homicide; youth suicide; unintentional shootings; and firearms in school. We have also included recommendations that would help alleviate gun violence among our young people.

It should be noted that the existing data does not distinguish, in most instances, between handguns and other firearms. Enactment of a system which would require physicians, coroners and others to specify the type of gun used to inflict injury would help pinpoint which guns are misused most frequently. The need for such a system was noted as long ago as 1986 when a John Hopkins University study recommended that the federal government:

The FBI reports that handguns are used in more than 80% of all gun murders.

> Require that firearm injury, in addition to being reportable to the police, be reportable to health departments. Place greater emphasis in coding the type of firearm on the death certificate. Develop a national fatal firearm injury reporting system, comparable to FARS (Fatal Accident Reporting System), with sufficient data for documenting the firearm problem and designing prevention strategies.[5]

Still, most evidence suggests that handguns are primarily responsible for most gun violence among young people. The FBI reports that handguns are used in more than 80% of all gun murders.[6] Furthermore, compared to other firearms, handguns are most often the weapon of choice among youth as they are with adult Americans because of their concealability and accessibility.

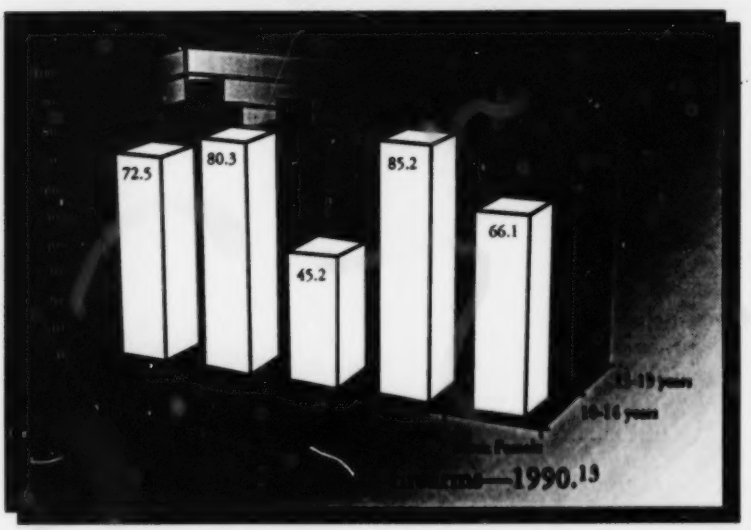


Firearm Homicide and Youth

Older friends, unknowing parents, and illegal street sales are sources from which a firearm can be obtained easily.

The homicide death rate among young people is rising as is the rate of youth charged with homicide.[8] Historically, the rate of homicide has always been higher for males than females and much higher for black males than white males – so much higher, that every year since 1969 the leading cause of death for black males 15 through 19 years of age has been firearm homicide.[9] Sixty percent of deaths for black males 15–19 years old are direct results of firearm injury, while twenty–three percent of deaths for white males 15–19 years old directly result from firearm injury.[10] These numbers illustrate the huge difference between black male and white male firearm death rates. However, even among white males, firearms are responsible for an alarmingly high number of deaths.

At the heart of these problems is the far too easy accessibility of firearms. By federal law, anyone under the age of twenty–one is not allowed to buy a handgun and anyone under the age of eighteen is not allowed to buy a long gun, but these statutes do not prevent young people from obtaining firearms. Older friends, unknowing parents, and illegal street sales are sources from which a firearm can be obtained easily. The availability of firearms has made firearm injuries the second leading cause of death behind motor vehicle accidents for youth ages 10–19.[11] For black males ages 10–19, the rate of death from firearms now exceeds that from motor vehicle accidents.[12]



The vast majority of homicides are committed with a firearm. In 1990, 91% of black male homicides for the ages 15–19 involved a firearm, while 77% of white male homicides for the same ages involved a firearm.[14] Guns make it easy to kill, far easier than any other weapon commonly available. The easy availability of handguns is greatly responsible for the skyrocketing murder rate in this country.

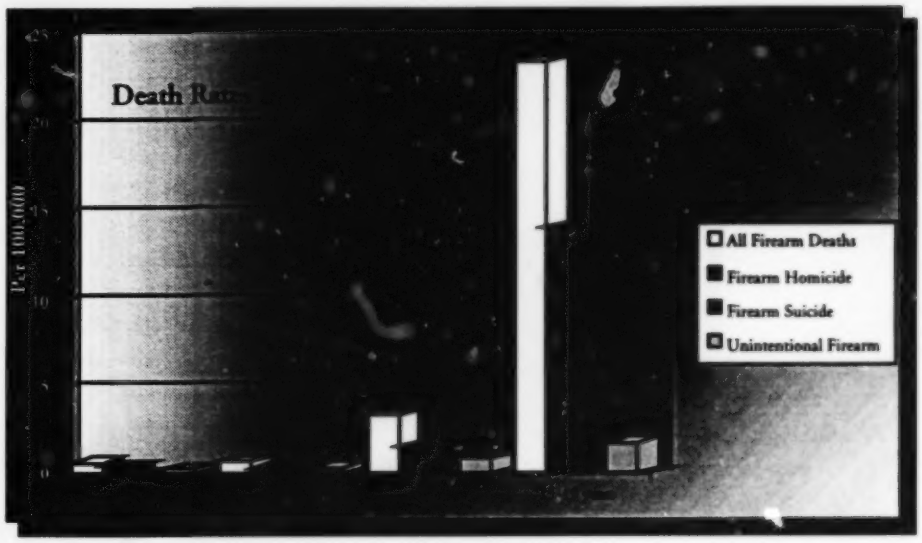
The availability of firearms has made firearm injuries the second leading cause of death behind motor vehicle accidents for youth ages 10–19.

A common stereotype that the public holds is of a masked intruder killing and robbing at whim, but, in fact, nearly half of the homicides in America today involve people who know one another.[15] Friends, family members, and acquaintances are much more likely to commit a homicide than is someone unknown to the victim. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report, only 15% of homicide victims were murdered by strangers in 1991; in an additional 39% of murders the relationship was unknown.[16] A plurality of murders occurs between friends and family members.

Young people in particular tend to be very rash and have little sense of the consequences of their actions. James Fox, one of the authors of the Northeastern University report, points out the difference between a 45–year–old with a gun and a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

14–year–old with a gun: "A 45–year–old with a gun in his hand, although he may be a better shot, is not as likely to use that gun as a 14–year–old. Fourteen–year–olds tend to be trigger–happy.... They'll pull that trigger if someone looks at them the wrong way. They'll pull that trigger if someone swears at them. They'll pull that trigger without thinking about the consequences."[17] As violence has become commonplace in our society, more and more young people have come to see gun violence as an acceptable way to solve problems. For them, there is nothing unusual about a handful of children being shot in a weekend. There is nothing extraordinary about a child being shot in school. The pervasiveness of gun violence in our society and the passive permissiveness shown by our society towards gun violence has not only made our streets unsafe, but helped mold a generation of children who think gun violence is as American as baseball and apple pie. The rampant exposure of youth to weapons of such deadly force has resulted in the tragic waste of too many young lives.



James Fox explains some of the reasons for the increase in violence:

> Clearly we have become a more violent society. The recent wave of youth violence cannot be explained away as a function of demographic shifts or changes in criminal justice policy. Compared with their parents when they were teenagers, the new youth generation has more dangerous drugs in their bodies, more deadly weapons in their hands and are being socialized into a culture having a far more casual attitude toward violence.[19]

The pervasiveness of gun violence in our society and the passive permissiveness shown by our society towards gun violence has not only made our streets unsafe, but helped mold a generation of children who think gun violence is as American as baseball and apple pie.

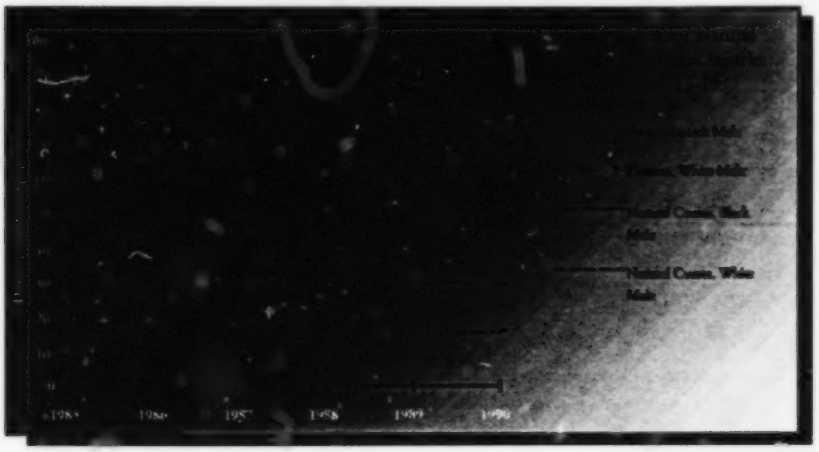
The deadly combination of guns and the rashness of youth is increasingly common and there are many chilling examples. A New York Times article examined the reasons young men cite for using a gun.[20] Although most people would consider resorting to a gun only in life–threatening situations, to these young men it seemed like an appropriate response in less–threatening situations. (The young men in the article were all serving life sentences.)

—Jamel, a thirteen–year–old boy, was upset about being ignored by girls. After running into a hallway where a crack dealer had been watching Jamel's latest run–in with girls who had ignored him, Jamel decided to get even. "I was going to ask him for the gun," Jamel said, "but he just gave it to me. He said, 'Yo, go rob 'em.'" Jamel and another boy chased the girls, only to find the girls mocking Jamel again. With that, Jamel fired the gun killing one of the girls.

One should consider that if the rest of the population was being murdered by firearms at a rate equal to that of young black males, over 260,000 Americans would be shot to death each year.

Gun violence ended the lives of nearly 5,000 young people in 1990.

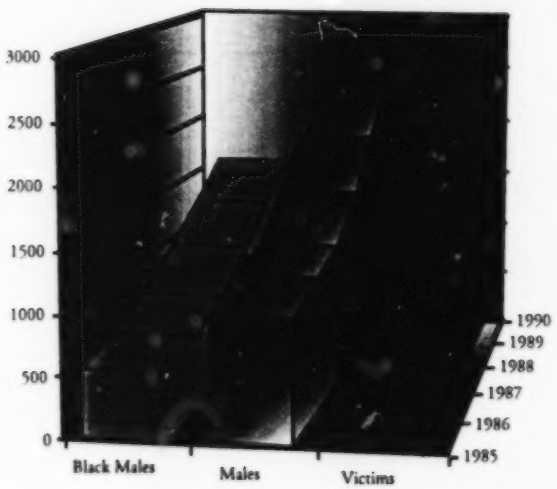
——Andre, a fifteen–year–old boy, was scared of being beaten up by a group of boys in his neighborhood. He already had been assaulted by the boys before, when he finally decided not to be intimidated any longer. When he saw the boys next, he did not avoid them, choosing to face them with a gun. One of the boys jumped up to confront Andre. "I had the gun behind my back, but he could see it," Andre said. "I'm telling him to back away or else I'm going to have to shoot. I was petrified I was going to get jumped. The guy said, 'If you shoot me, you better kill me, because I'll get you.'" Andre got him first. "I didn't intend to kill him," Andre said later, "I just wanted to scare him. I didn't know it would go off so easily."



24

These two accounts illuminate the needless destruction that regularly occurs on our streets. Neither boy realized the consequences of his actions. They were unable to equate pulling the trigger of a gun with someone falling to the street dead. They did not understand the dangers of weapons, and did not give much thought to what might happen to them or their victims after they pulled the trigger. What they did see was a quick, easy solution to a problem. Their responses to these scenarios are considered appropriate by many other youth and adults. Violent retaliation to threats or slights both real and imagined has become all too common and accepted.

Firearms Murder Victims Ages 10-19 Years 1985-1990 [25]



Reflecting the current violent trends, the firearm homicide rate for black males 15 through 19 years of age has nearly tripled to 105.3 deaths per 100,000 during the years 1985 to 1990.[21] During this same time period, the firearm homicide rate for white males and black females 15–19 years of age doubled, increasing to 9.7 and 10.4 per 100,000 respectively.[22] Still, black males are nearly 11 times more likely to be murdered with a firearm than their white counterparts. To put this in perspective, one should consider that if the rest of the population was being murdered by firearms at a rate equal to that of young black males, over 260,000 Americans would be shot to death each year.[23] It is troubling that more is not being done by community and national leaders to curb the firearm homicide rate of young black males.

According to the FBI Uniform Crime Report published in 1992, 80% of firearm homicides are committed with a handgun, although inadequacies in the reporting system probably understate the number of handgun homicides.[26] Handguns show up as murder weapons, because they are extremely easy to conceal and extremely lethal. As for youth, kids increasingly bring their guns to school, carry them around their neighborhoods and use them to settle disputes.

It is easy to reduce this epidemic to cold facts and figures, forgetting about the families and loved ones left behind to deal with their losses. Gun violence ended the lives of nearly 5,000 young people in 1990.[27] They never had a chance to realize their potential. Families and friends are left to struggle with their death and feelings of loss. More and more Americans have devastating stories to tell about how gun violence has shaped their lives.

•5 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Youth And Firearm Suicide

The Centers for Disease Control report that 1 in every 12 high school students has attempted suicide, and approximately 16% of high school students have made specific plans to take their own lives.[28] These numbers illustrate the potential problems for teenagers, and the need to keep firearms away from troubled teens.

Suicide rates vary widely by race and gender. The American Association of Suicidology reports that females attempt suicide 3 to 4 times as often as males do, but that males complete suicide at rates three to four times those of females.[29] The explanation for the discrepancy is that males, especially white males whose rates of suicide are roughly twice those of all other groups, tend to use more lethal means, such as a firearm, to commit suicide.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that 55% of suicides among youth ages 10–14 are committed with a firearm, while 67.3% of suicides completed by youth ages 15–19 are committed with a firearm.[30] Estimates on the ratio of attempted suicides by youth to actual suicide deaths have generally ranged between 100 to 1 and 200 to 1.[31] This ratio decreases dramatically when a firearm is easily accessible. In a moment of despair, a gun can provide an all too deadly means to end a life.

A handgun in the home is more likely to be used in a suicide than in any other circumstance which results in a death.

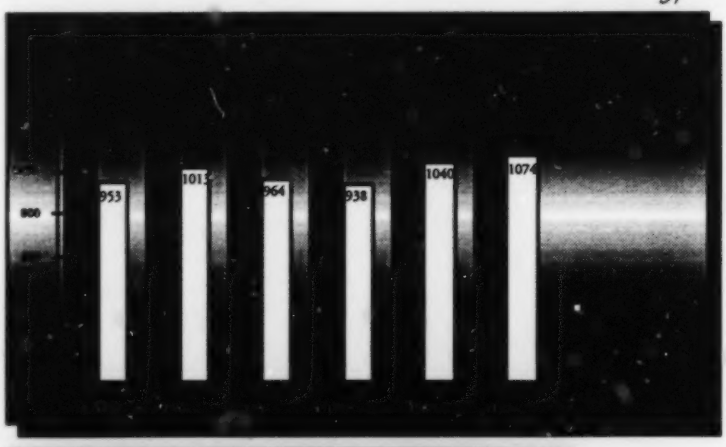
Age	Total	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female
10-14	55.0	53.7	56.1	71.4	62.5
15-19	67.3	69.4	57.3	76.4	65.4

Percent of all suicides due to firearms[32]

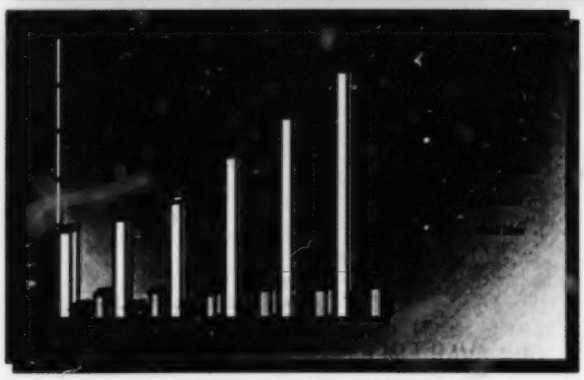
People who commit suicide are 2.5 times more likely to have a firearm in their home than those who do not commit suicide.[33] The availability of firearms in the home makes it easier for suicides to occur. A handgun in the home is more likely to be used in a suicide than in any other circumstance which results in a death.[34] According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, a handgun in the home is 43 times more likely to be used to kill a family member or friend than it is to be used in a justifiable homicide and over 86% of those deaths were suicides.[35] This study shatters the myth that handguns are invaluable as a means of self–protection. It does show that a handgun in the home endangers the lives of loved ones more often than it protects them.

The availability of firearms is directly related to the number of suicides committed by young people. A study published in the Journal of American Medicine found that strict gun control laws help lower the rate of youth firearm suicide.[36]

37



38



•6

Firearms And Unintentional Deaths

"If you do not need to have a gun, do not buy one. If you already have one, think about whether you really need it. Is it worth risking your child's or grandchild's life?"

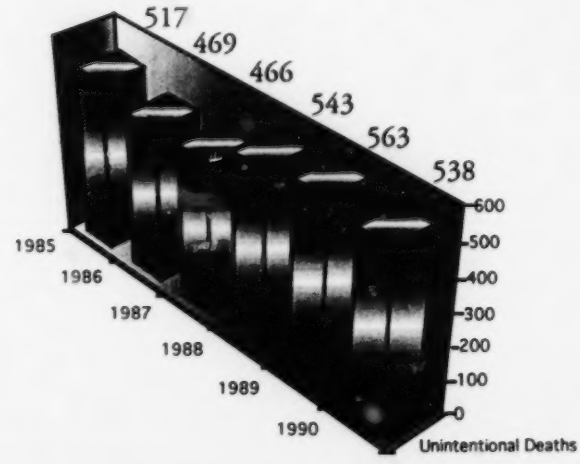
As too many parents discover belatedly, a child's natural curiosity makes storing a handgun in the home a dangerous proposition. Despite safeguards, children can easily find a supposedly hidden gun. A child fascinated by the world of television and movie violence, may want to show off the gun to friends at home or at school; this is the beginning of a familiar scenario that too often ends in tragedy.

Pro–gun groups argue that children must be taught the dangers of guns at an early age and instructed properly in the use and storage of a firearm. This may sound like good advice, but it does not guarantee safety. Easy access to a firearm simply spells disaster for a troubled teen or a curious toddler. Despite parents' best intentions, they must be aware that a gun stored in the home jeopardizes, rather than ensures, a child's safety.

Most unintentional deaths that result from firearms are due to children playing with guns or just showing off. Children obtain guns from a variety of sources, but most often from their parents who bought the gun for protection. The first of two studies sponsored by the Chicago–based Joyce Foundation, and conducted by pollster Louis Harris, discovered that one in six parents knows a child who was found playing with a loaded gun.[39] Unintentional firearm deaths are especially tragic, because they can be prevented so easily by not keeping a handgun in the home.

Several states have adopted laws that hold adults criminally liable if children are injured or killed by negligently stored weapons. One of the first people convicted under the new California statute was Nicolas Conchas of San Jose, California. Mr. Conchas, following a New Year's Eve tradition, rang in the New Year by firing his pistol into the air. On New Year's morning, Nicolas Conchas awoke to discover that his 4–year–old grandson had found the loaded weapon and fatally shot himself in the heart.[40] As part of his sentence, the court required Nicolas Conchas to appear on Spanish language television and radio stations to make public service announcements, appealing to others not to make the same mistake. "I want to tell everyone that it is very dangerous to have guns in your home if you have children," said Mr. Conchas. "If you do not need to have a gun, do not buy one. If you already have one, think about whether you really need it. Is it worth risking your child's or grandchild's life?"

Unintentional Gun Deaths
19 and Under 1985–90 [42]



Advocates believe that laws like the California statute will reduce the number of unintentional deaths of children by making parents more aware of their responsibilities. According to gun safety groups, safe storage of firearms is accomplished by storing the weapon and the ammunition in separate secured containers. But for many gun owners who want immediate access to their firearm, these safety measures are contrary to the purpose of having a gun in the home. Too often, they choose to ignore safety precautions. Perhaps, the new laws assigning parents responsibility will reduce the number of unintentional shootings. Certainly no parent wants harm to come to his or her child, but parents must be made acutely aware of the deadly dangers of having a gun in the home. To reduce both suicides and unintentional deaths, parents need to realize that a safer home is a home without a gun.

•7 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Gun Violence In Schools

Over the past several years, gun violence has increased dramatically in our nation's schools. No longer a safe haven for learning, schools have come to reflect the violence found on the streets. Many students fear violent attacks travelling to and from school as well as within school itself. This fear leads many to the mistaken conclusion that a gun is their best means of defense. A 1990 survey conducted by the Centers For Disease Control found that on an average day 1 in 20 high school students carries a gun to school.[42] That means every day approximately 100,000 students across the country bring guns to school.[43] No wonder the Joyce Foundation study discovered that only 29% of parents believe that most children are safe from violence while in school.[44]

Fear is not the sole reason these youngsters bring guns to school. According to Edward Muir, director of school safety for the United Federation of Teachers, "Certain neighborhoods just have a Dodge City culture in which every male, aged 14 and up, is seriously thinking about which handgun he ought to buy."[45]

Gun violence in schools is not a problem confined to our large cities. Paul Kingery, a Texas A&M researcher, reports that rural students are twice as likely to carry a gun to school than the national average.[46] The willingness of youth to carry guns combined with the easy accessibility of firearms has placed a deadly obstacle in the already difficult path of obtaining a quality education in schools throughout the country.

The willingness of youth to carry guns combined with the easy accessibility of firearms has placed a deadly obstacle in the already difficult path of obtaining a quality education in schools throughout the country.

The following excerpts are from the American School Board Journal, which contained a sample of gun violence in our nations'schools.[47] Note that incidents of gun violence occur in both large and small cities.

- Obetz, Ohio: A 12–year–old student allegedly fired five rounds of ammunition during lunch period in the cafeteria of Hamilton Township Middle School. One student was shot in the head with a bullet from a .22–caliber revolver, which police said the boy admitted taking from his home. Sheriff's deputies reported that they believed the two youths had been arguing before the shooting.

- Raleigh, N.C.: A high school student was wounded in the leg when one of two .22–caliber pistols in his book bag accidentally fired in a classroom.

- Hammond, Indiana: A kindergarten student fired shots from a .22–caliber pistol into the school ceiling after finding the gun in his classmate's knapsack. Police said a 6–year–old found his uncle's .22–caliber pistol, put it in his knapsack, and took it to school. About 2 p.m., a classmate reached into the boy's pack for a pencil, pulled out the gun, and pulled the trigger. The same day, Hammond police reported that they found a 7–year–old girl trying to sell a handgun to raise money to bail her grandfather out of jail.

❑ Chicago: An 8–year–old girl was shot in the back in her third–grade classroom. During questioning, police said the classmate who allegedly shot the girl asked, "Is this going to take long? I have somewhere to go tonight."

❑ Webster, Florida: A first–grade student was expelled after firing a derringer on school grounds and later threatening to shoot a teacher who scolded him. According to news wire reports, the boy's parents said the youngster obtained the gun by stacking stereo speakers and furniture on top of each other so that he could reach the weapon atop a 7–foot–tall cabinet; the parents also said the youngster found bullets elsewhere and loaded the gun himself before heading for school.

❑ Longview, Texas: Three Longview High School students, including two bystanders, were wounded in the school's locker area when a simmering argument over a girlfriend broke out in gunfire. According to police, the two 17–year–olds in question had threatened to harm each other earlier in the week and had come back to school armed; one with a .25–caliber pistol and one with a .22–caliber revolver.

It is difficult to determine the effect gun violence has upon the learning of each student. The Joyce Foundation poll examining students' attitudes towards gun violence found that only 21% of students feel they are safe from violence in the schools and only 30% feel they are safe travelling to and from school.[48] Deborah Leff, the Joyce Foundation president, speaking of the poll reported that: "Parents say many of their children can't concentrate in school, that they're afraid to go outside, that their entire quality of life is lessened because there are so many guns out there. We have to find a way to put a stop to the killing and to focus on prevention."[49] Even the constant threat of gun violence can have a far reaching effect on the development of a child.

There are differing estimates about where children get their guns. School security experts and law enforcement officials estimate that 80% of the firearms students bring to school come from home,[50] while students estimate that 40% of their peers who bring guns to school buy them on the street.[51] The Joyce Foundation study examining the attitudes of parents towards gun violence determined that only 43% of parents with children under 18 years old who own a gun keep that gun safely locked.[52] Parents must take more responsibility for their children's actions and their children's safety.

The measures taken so far, however, to curb the flow of guns in schools have been largely ineffective. Metal detectors, both hand held and walk–through, provide little resistance to a determined student bent on wreaking havoc. "If you think you've solved the problem by putting a metal detector at the front door, you're kidding yourself," says Larry Burgan, security director for the Baltimore City Schools.[53] Most schools lack sufficient funds to purchase more than one walk through metal detector. Moreover, metal detector searches are time–consuming, especially considering that to be entirely effective, hundreds and even thousands of students must be processed through a single checkpoint. In short, metal detectors are both inefficient and ineffective, but little else has been pro-

posed to prevent guns from entering the school.

A recent more promising approach are anti–violence curricula being instituted in school systems. Children need to learn at an early age how to deal with their aggressions without hurting others. Administrators and teachers are finally providing children with non–violent methods of solving problems. These curricula can help mold a generation that solves problems nonviolently. The urgency of developing and implementing new curricula is clear because arguments which were once settled by fist fights on the school playground are now being settled with shootouts.

For every youth killed by firearms, there are roughly 7.5 times that number of youth who are shot but live.[54] Considering that 13 kids under the age of 19 are shot to death every day, approximately 98 kids are injured every day from firearms. Those who survive firearm injuries often have a lifetime of rehabilitation to endure. In 1990, the total cost of firearm injuries was estimated as high as 20.4 billion dollars.[55] Many of these injuries require a tremendous amount of recuperative time – time that is lost forever from adolescence. This young generation is being robbed of its youth. Of the students polled in the Joyce Foundation survey, 35% believe that their "chances of living to a ripe old age will be cut short because of the threat of them being wiped out from guns."[56]

For every youth killed by firearms, there are roughly 7.5 times that number of youth who are shot but live. Considering that 13 kids under the age of 19 are shot to death every day, approximately 98 kids are injured every day from firearms.

By now, the threat of gun violence affects all our lives. The shocking randomness and senselessness of violent acts is well documented. We all face the difficulty of living our lives safely without letting our lives be completely dictated by fear.

A first step towards ensuring our safety is removing the weapons of death from our society. Realizing that a gun makes any situation deadly, it is no wonder that the growing unregulated arsenal of weapons on our streets has made our world more sinister with each passing day. This is the legacy that decades of indifference toward the problem of gun violence has left for our nation's youth.

Since it is impossible to separate the problem of kids and guns from the more general societal problem of gun violence, we should enact measures that more strictly regulate the sale, manufacture,transfer and possession of handguns. Although it is illegal for kids to purchase handguns, it is important to remember that every handgun a child obtains, through whatever means, was at one time made, bought and sold legally. If we are ever going to cut off the flow of handguns to youths, then we must do a much better job in regulating the flow of handguns to adults. The current laws which allow almost anyone to buy a handgun with no questions asked are a disgrace. Until this nation and its leaders decide that gun violence is a serious problem which must be dealt with appropriately, our children will continue to suffer the consequences.

Recommendations

Many of the recommendations stated in the second edition of Kids and Guns in 1989 have remained the same. These recommendations are a first step in preventing youth deaths and injuries due to guns.

1. Guns, specifically handguns, should be removed from homes with children. Guns kept in the home should, at the very least, be unloaded and locked up, with ammunition kept locked up separately. Following these guidelines, handgun owners should consider and implement alternative self–defense methods, if that is the reason they are keeping handguns in the home.

2. Students need to get involved in this issue. Just as there are local chapters of Students Against Driving Drunk, there could be groups of students organized against firearms, particularly handguns.

3. Schools should encourage student involvement in the above mentioned organizations. In school districts where the problem is acute, students need to be encouraged to suggest solutions, programs or ideas that might help the violence problem. School boards ought to incorporate into the curricula facts on firearms which will encourage children to not own guns as adults and to urge their parents to remove firearms, specifically handguns, from homes.

4. Congress should give the Consumer Product Safety Commission or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms the authority to regulate safety aspects of firearms. Currently, there are no minimum safety requirements on domestic firearm manufacturers, nor does the Consumer Product Safety Commission or any other agency have the authority to regulate manufacturers.

5. National and local student and youth serving organizations can fully integrate gun safety education into their on–going programs. The program should be developed independent of the NRA and under no circumstance should the NRA, its products or publications profit from these efforts. The program should emphasize the dangers of firearms, especially handguns, and not simply be a gun shooting safety course.

6. Congress should endorse measures that restrict the easy accessibility of firearms and more effectively regulate the ownership of firearms. These measures would be instrumental in keeping firearms out of the hands of youth. Local and state governments should take similar measures, particularly paying attention to maintaining "safety zones" around schools.

7. Schools must take a more active role in teaching young people peaceful conflict resolution. Students need to learn at an early age that violence is not a solution.

8. It is time that celebrities and other role models take a more active role in educating young people on the dangers of firearms. They have a tremendous influence over young people and this is a unique opportunity to save lives and prevent injury.

9. Finally, the Education Fund to End Handgun Violence urges the Surgeon General's office to mount a massive public education program detailing the dangers of firearms. This program could be modelled after the successful anti–smoking campaign. Its aim would be to educate the entire population, but specifically focus young people.

Sources

Pierce and Fox, "Recent Trends in Violent Crime: A Closer Look", National Crime Analysis Program, Northeastern University, October 1992.

Rice, Dorothy; Ellen MacKenzie and Associates. Cost of Injury in the United States: A Report to Congress. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Health & Aging, University of California and Injury Prevention Center, The Johns Hopkins University. 1989.

Press Release, Northeastern University, October 14, 1992.

United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States 1991.

Fingerhut LA. "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90" Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics; no. 231. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 1993.

Fingerhut LA, Ingram DD, Feldman JJ, "Firearm Homicide Among Black Teenage Males in Metropolitan Counties," The Journal of the American Medical Association. 267 (1992).

Treaster, JB, "Teen–Age Murderers: Plentiful Guns, Easy Power," New York Times. May 24, 1992.

Carton, Barbara "Is the Family Crumbling? It is, NU Researchers Say, and It's Making Kids Kill." Boston Globe, November 12, 1992.

Brent DA, Perper JA, Alman CJ, Moritz GM, Wartella ME, Zelenak JP. "The Presence and Accessibility of Firearms in the Homes of Adolescent Suicides." The Journal of the American Medical Association. 266: 2989–2995, December 4, 1991.

American Association of Suicidology, "Some Facts About Suicide In the U.S. A." 1993.

Kellerman A, Reay D, "Protection or Peril? An Analysis of Firearm–Related Deaths in the Home," New England Journal of Medicine. 314, June 12, 1986.

Gross, Jane "Sentenced to Warn All: Handle With Care." The New York Times. December 31, 1992.

Harrington–Leuker, Donna, "Blown Away," The American School Board Journal. May 1992.

Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of the American People on Guns as a Children's Health Issue," June 1993.

Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of Experiences, Perceptions, and Apprehensions about Guns Among Young People in America," July 1993.

CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report "Attempted Suicide Among High School Students," United States, September 20, 1991. Vol 40/No. 37.

CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report "Weapon–Carrying Among High School Students," United States, October 11, 1991. Vol. 40/No. 40.

Endnotes

1. Pierce and Fox, "Recent Trends in Violent Crime: A Closer Look," National Crime Analysis Program, Northeastern University, october 1992, p. 1.

2._____. "Recent Trends in Violent Crime: A Closer Look," pps. 2–3.

3._____. "Recent Trends in Violent Crime: A Closer Look," Table 3.

4. Fingerhut, LA. "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90" Advance data from vital and health statistics: no. 231. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics. 1993, p. 12.

5. Rice, Dorothy: Ellen MacKenzie and Associates. Cost of Injury in the United States: A Report to Congress. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Health & Aging, University of California and Injury Prevention Center, The Johns Hopkins University, 1989, p. 191.

6. United States Department Of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States 1991, Table 2.9, p. 17.

7. Fingerhut, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1-34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Table 3.

8. Pierce and Fox, "Recent Trends in Violent Crime: A Closer Look," p. 1.

9. Fingerhut LA, Ingram DD, Feldman JJ, "Firearm Homicide Among Black Teenage Males in Metropolitan Counties, Comparison of Death Rates in Two Periods, 1983 Through 1985 and 1987 Through 1989,"The Journal of the American Medical Association, June 10, 1992. p. 3054.

10. Fingerhut LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," p. 1.

11._____, p. 6.

12._____, p. 6.

13. _____, Table 1.

14. _____, Table 1.

15. United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States 1991, p. 19.

16._____, p. 19.

17. Carton, Barbara "Is the Family Crumbling? It is, NU Researchers Say, and It's Making Kids Kill." Boston Globe, November 12, 1992.

18. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Figure 2.

19. Press Release, Northeastern University, October 14, 1992.

20. Treaster, JB, "Teen–Age Murderers: Plentiful Guns, Easy Power," New York Times, May 24, 1992.

21. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age,Trends and Current Status: United States,1985–90,"p. 9.

22._____, p. 9.

23. This number is found by multiplying the firearm homicide rate of black males ages 15–19 times the approximate population of the United States. (105.3/ 100,000) X 250,000,000.

24. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Figure 3.

25._____, Table 2.

26. United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States 1991, p. 17.

27. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90" Table 3.

28. CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report "Attempted Suicide Among High School Students," United States, September 20, 1991 Vol.40, No.37, Table 1.

29. American Association of Suicidology, "Some Facts About Suicide in the USA." 1993.

30. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Table 1.

31. American Association of Suicidology, "Some Facts About Suicide in the USA" 1993.

32. Finger hut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States 1985-90," Table 1.

33. Brent DA, Perper JA, Alman CJ, Moritz GM, Wartella ME, Zelenak JP, "The Presence and Accessibility of Firearms in the Homes of Adolescent Suicides," The Journal of the American Medical Association, December 4, 1991, p. 2990.

34. Rellerman A, Reay D, "Protection or Peril? An Analysis of Firearm–Related Deaths in the Home," New England Journal of Medicine. June 12, 1986, p. 1557.

35._____, pps. 1557, 1560.

36. Brent DA, Perper JA, Alman CJ, Moritz GM, Wartella ME, Zelenak JP, "The Presence and Accessibility of Firearms in the Homes of Adolescent Suicides," p. 2995.

37. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Table 3.

38. _____, Figure 4.

39. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of the American People on Guns as a Children's Health Issue," June 1993. p. 11.

40. Gross, Jane "Sentenced to Warn All: Handle With Care," The New York Times, December 31, 1992.

41. Fingerhut, LA, "Firearm Mortality Among Children, Youth, and Young Adults 1–34 Years of Age, Trends and Current Status: United States, 1985–90," Table 3.

42. CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report "Weapon–Carrying Among High School Students," United States, October 11, 1991, Vol. 40 NO. 40.

43. National Education Association statistics.

44. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of the American People on Guns as a Children's Health Issue," p. 2.

45. Harrington–Leuker, Donna "Blown Away," The American School Board Journal, May 1992. p. 21.

47. Reprinted with permission, from The American School Board Journal,May. Copyright 1992, the National School Boards Associations, all rights reserved.

48. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of Experiences, Perceptions, and Apprehensions about Guns Among Young People in America," July 1993, p. 2.

49. The Joyce Foundation News Release, June 3, 1993.

50. Harrington–Leuker, Donna, "Blown Away," p. 22.

51. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of Experiences, Perceptions, and Apprehensions about Guns Among Young People in America," p. 12.

52. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of the American People on Guns as a Children's Health Issue," p. 20.

53. Harrington–Leuker, Donna "Blown Away," pps. 26–27.

54. Rice, Dorothy: Ellen MacKenzie and Associates. Cost of Injury in the United States: A Report to Congress, p. 210.

55. Wendy Max and Dorothy P. Rice, "Shooting in the Dark: Estimating the Cost of Firearm Injuries," Institute for Health & Aging, School of Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, July, 1993. p. 15.

56. Louis Harris Research, Inc. "A Survey of Experiences, Perceptions, and Apprehensions about Guns Among Young People in America," p. 22.

THE EDUCATIONAL FUND TO END HANDGUN VIOLENCE

110 Maryland Avenue NE • Box 72 • Washington. D.C. 20002
202•544•7214

BEST COPY AVAILABLE